

COUNCIL ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION NEWS RELEASE

Release Date: February 23, 2006

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Committee on Equal Opportunities advocates for equity and access in postsecondary education

(FRANKFORT, Ky)--The Council on Postsecondary Education's Committee on Equal Opportunities reviewed a report earlier this week describing institutional success in increasing equity and access in postsecondary education. The Degree Program Eligibility Status Report measures each institution's progress toward the objectives of the Kentucky Plan for Equal Opportunities, which focuses on the enrollment, retention, graduation rates and employment of African Americans.

In order for Kentucky's public, four-year postsecondary institutions to be automatically eligible to propose new degree programs each year, they must meet at least six of eight objectives of the Kentucky Plan. Six universities, compared to seven in 2005, met this requirement, including Eastern Kentucky University, Kentucky State University, Northern Kentucky University, University of Louisville, University of Kentucky, and Western Kentucky University. Universities that did not meet the requirement may request a waiver.

Community and technical college districts must meet at least three of four objectives of the plan. In the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS), seven of sixteen districts are automatically eligible to propose new degree programs in 2006, compared to eight in 2005.

The CEO oversees the Commonwealth's desegregation and equal opportunities plans for postsecondary education. The committee reviews institutional progress and makes recommendations for equal opportunities policy improvements to the Council.

"The CEO pursues the goals of the Public Agenda for postsecondary and adult education by promoting equity across the postsecondary system," said Sherron Jackson, assistant vice president for EEO and finance at the Council. "In order for Kentucky to double the number of Kentuckians with a bachelor's degree by 2020, we must ensure that all students have access and are prepared for postsecondary education."

At its February 20 meeting, the CEO also heard a report from KCTCS regarding its implementation of the committee's recommendations to increase diversity efforts in all 16 college districts. The recommendations resulted from a first-time meeting with the KCTCS president and the district college presidents in September 2005.

KCTCS reported several measures have been implemented in response to the CEO's recommendations and as a part of the 2006-2010 KCTCS Strategic Plan. The measures include: One of four goals in the 2006-2010 KCTCS Strategic Plan is "to enhance diversity and global awareness."

- All districts are in the process of hiring directors of cultural diversity that report directly to the college president or a member of the leadership team.
- Two statewide committees are in place to identify ways in which KCTCS can enhance diversity efforts at each college and systemwide.

- A component to measure performance on diversity is included in each college president's annual performance evaluation.
- KCTCS adopted a systemwide diversity statement.
- KCTCS revised its diversity plan template to be used by all districts to develop individual campus diversity plans.

The CEO also heard from the University of Kentucky regarding how the university is addressing the 40 percent drop in enrollment of African American freshman in fall 2005. The report included results of a survey of the African American students who were admitted to UK last fall, but did not enroll.

UK has undertaken several initiatives including the hiring of a new diversity enrollment manager, three recruiters and three admissions officers in the admissions office; the reallocation of \$500,000 into the William C. Parker scholarship fund; and the appointment of a Task Force on Diversity and Racial Equality.

In other business, the Committee on Equal Opportunities:

- Adopted the report of its October 2005 campus visit at Eastern Kentucky University. ECU will respond to the committee's recommendations at the April 17 committee meeting.
- Received an annual report on the Governor's Minority Student College Preparation Program. In 2005, the program served 1,079 students in the funded programs at public universities and community and technical colleges representing 143 middle and junior high schools across the state. The report stated that parents noted significant improvement in students' academic performance, attitude, behavior, and study habits as well as, a better understanding of the necessity to enroll in rigorous courses to meet their education career goals.
- Heard a report from UofL regarding initiatives undertaken to address the CEO recommendations from their April 2005 visit.

For more information about the Committee on Equal Opportunities, visit <http://www.cpe.ky.gov/committees/ceo/>. For more information about the report on degree program eligibility, visit <http://www.cpe.ky.gov/NR/rdonlyres/1DC27837-DCE7-43F1-9EB4-5BADC486820A/0/DegreeProgramEligibilityAttachment20606.pdf>.

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Kentucky's postsecondary education system encompasses eight public institutions and the Kentucky Community and Technical College System, numerous independent institutions and Kentucky Adult Education. The system represents 231,612 students, 538,866 Kentucky alumni and 294,896 GED recipients. When Kentuckians earn postsecondary degrees, their skills improve and their wages go up; they are more likely to lead healthy lives and be engaged in their communities; and they build better futures for themselves and their families.